

THE MUSICAL TIMES

AND

Singing Class Circular,

Published on the 1st of every Month.

No. 56.—Vol. 3.

JANUARY 1, 1849.

{ Price 1¹/₂d.
{ Stamped, 2¹/₂d.

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And Singing Class Circular.

JANUARY 1st, 1849.

ON MUSICAL DEGREES.

To the Editor of the "Musical Times."

SIR,—You will doubtless have noticed with pleasure the increasing number of young musicians, who, in the present day, are entitled to attach to their names the distinctions, *Mus. Bac.* (Bachelor in Music), or *Mus. Doc.* (Doctor in Music).

The principal condition for obtaining the first of these honourable distinctions, is to submit for the approbation of the Professor in Music at the Universities of Oxford or Cambridge, the composition of a piece of music for voices in five parts, with an accompaniment for the organ; and, for the Doctor's degree, the composition of a piece of music for voices in eight parts, with accompaniment for an orchestra.

The general public, and those unable to form an opinion of a young professor's merit, may thus have a guarantee of the musical progress made by those who have successfully passed either ordeal; and the benefits to the musical art of some such test, previously to any professor being engaged as a teacher of music, are so evident, that the public may feel surprised that the instances are yet so few of musical professors who take advantage of this official evidence of merit, although well able, from their education, to fulfil the before-stated conditions; but I think I shall be able to point to other conditions, at present required on taking musical degrees, which act as obstructions to the spread of what might otherwise be an excellent measure of musical merit.

The cost of taking either degree is more than fifty pounds; the Doctor's degree considerably exceeding that sum: and large as the sums are, their amount appears still more objectionable when we learn how they are appropriated. The University Professor, who examines the candidate's composition, and pronounces on its merit, receives but three guineas, and all the rest is required for fees, and other matters, which do not forward the interests of the musical art. Part of the expense arises from the condition, which requires the candidate's composition to be publicly performed in Oxford or Cambridge by resident musicians, generally necessitating the hire of some public room, and otherwise entailing expense, which in no way contributes to settle the real question at issue, viz.: the candidate's qualification as a composer.

At the time that a candidate is put to this unnecessary trouble and expense, the entire proceedings fail to prove one material point—a point which should be placed beyond dispute, viz.: proof that the composition is really the production of the candidate for honors.

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A similar test might easily be arranged for musical degrees, so that the University Professor should call on the candidate to compose, in his presence, certain parts to a theme to be then furnished. If such a procedure had been hitherto insisted upon, the accusation which has been openly made against a *Mus. Bac.* of the present day—that he obtained his degree by a composition which had been written for him—would have been impossible; and the possibility of this having occurred, whether the accusation in the particular instance alluded to, be true or false, should make an alteration in the present mode of examination imperative.

The extra trouble to the University Professor might be repaid by doubling his present fee; and such increase would be no burthen to the candidate, if the remaining expenses were abated.

But it seems to me, that if the cost of these degrees were brought within any reasonable sum, so many professors would avail themselves of honors, which would be attainable only by really skilled musicians, that a moderate fee would not only well repay the University Professor, but that the surplus might go towards the foundation of musical scholarships, to be bestowed on promising musical students. The public would also have a ready means of avoiding those proverbially blind leaders, who at present are so hard to detect, and of whom the patronage is detrimental to the art in so many ways.

It was my intention to have given some account of the objectionable power possessed by some authorities in England to confer musical degrees, without requiring any test; and also of a pleasanter theme, in a short notice of the foundation of the Oxford Professorship of Music, which is attributed to our enlightened King Alfred the Great; and of some other matters connected with this interesting subject; but I find that my communication has run to so unreasonable a length, that I will reserve what I had to say until I see whether you will find room for what I have already sent; and in the mean time I beg to subscribe myself

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ANCIENT CHURCH MUSIC.

From the "Manchester Examiner and Times."

At the present day, we have rarely an opportunity of hearing properly sung—sung as it used to be, between two and three centuries ago, in this country, sometimes by thousands of voices simultaneously—the genuine old psalm tunes. That the smooth but manly, simple but stately, and ever beautiful chorales of the early Anglican church, should have been almost entirely superseded by the light and effeminate compositions now, unhappily, so prevalent in our churches and chapels, however unaccountable, is notoriously true. Even those few of the former which have nominally remained in use, such as the Old Hundredth Psalm, have been so altered in their rhythm and their harmonies, and are generally sung in so drawing and slovenly a manner, as to render them very dissimilar from the older compositions bearing the same name. We are glad, however, to have noticed for some time passed unmistakable indications of a gradual return to the cultivation of the psalm tune as it was heard in its palmy days. Musicians of learning and correct taste have brought out of the obscurity in which they had so long lain, these religious songs of our ancestors. Their unrivalled beauty, and admirable suitability for the purposes of devotional singing, were at once apparent; and their introduction into places of worship has followed as a necessary consequence. We have been led into these remarks from having had an opportunity of hearing some beautiful specimens of this class of music at the Great George Street Chapel, Salford. The committee having some hundred copies of the tunes (all from Ravenscroft's *Whole Book of Psalms*)* intended to be sung on the occasion of a sermon on behalf of the Sunday school, we were led, from one of these falling under our notice, to attend. The singers (all amateurs) numbered about sixty. Upwards of twenty-five sung the air, or plain-song, about twelve the bass, twelve the treble, and about nine the alto. With scarcely an exception, we believe, every individual in the choir could read music. This is as it ought to be. The first tune sung was an excellent arrangement of the Old 137th, by Ravenscroft, a double common metre tune of great beauty. After prayer, the well-known hymn of Dr. Watts, beginning "Come, sound his praise abroad," was sung to the fine old minor "Southwell," as arranged by Mr. Pierson. It might, at first, by some, seem unsuitable to the words; but as sung to the hymn, as a whole, it was afterwards felt by all to be most appropriate. The leader led it off with spirit; and it was sung with great precision and energy, the audience being evidently affected. What a pity minors should be so generally excluded from the songs of the sanctuary! After an excellent sermon by Rev. W. F. Burchell, of Rochdale, that most beautiful tune, "Audi, Israel," was sung. It is sometimes called the "Ten Commandments' tune." The arrangement was by Allison, written for Este's work, and copied thence into Ravenscroft's publication. It is somewhat ornate; and the harmonies, especially in the last line, unusually rich. It was very well sung, by the trebles especially. While the collection was being made, the well-known hymn, "Come, let us join our cheerful songs," &c., was sung to the Old 81st, the choir remaining seated. This fine

old chorale, supposed by some to have been composed by Martin Luther, was sweetly sung. The last given was Milton's fine arrangement of "York" tune, at one period the most popular in England. We need scarcely add, that the congregation (quite as numerous as the place would hold) seemed much delighted with what they had heard; and we shall be glad of future opportunities of hearing other specimens of this class of ancient church song.

Review of New Music.

Sabilla Novello's Vocal School. Second Edition.

We are not surprised that this work should already have reached a second edition. The young lady's position in the musical world, both as a concert singer and as a professor of singing, is one to inspire confidence in any method coming from her pen; and she has given ample proof in this treatise, that she is well able to expound the principles by which she has attained the rank she now holds in her profession. The exercises have a simple and easy accompaniment, that any pupil can play for herself—a great improvement, be it observed, on the figured basses in the works of the elder masters of *solfeggio*, which only threw a needless difficulty in the student's way. In many instances the same accompaniment serves for a variety of exercises, thereby greatly simplifying the pupil's labour. For superficial students, such as amateur young ladies, who take alarm at a book of *solfeggio*, separate numbers of the work have been printed off, amongst which they can choose whatever *pleases* them most. But when we inform them that the whole *Vocal School* only numbers four-and-twenty pages, twelve of which are filled by miscellaneous and even amusing matter, we should esteem their love of music lukewarm indeed, if they hesitated going through the whole course of instruction set down for their use; especially as we can assure them, that whosoever shall have completely mastered the first twelve pages, will be able to sing anything and everything.—*Court Journal.*

Sequel to Sabilla Novello's Vocal School, containing a Selection from Sabbatini's Vocal Exercises.

These exercises are in the attractive form of canons and rounds for two soprano voices. Some of them are very pretty, and all are useful, containing, as they profess to do, "nearly every combination of intervals and time." They are excellent practice for preparing the pupil to sing duets; while those who are even proficient will derive considerable benefit from studying them, merely to keep up the flexibility of their voices. Like the above, this work may be purchased either as a whole or in separate numbers, at one shilling each.—*Court Journal.*

Elementary Vocal Exercises, selected chiefly from "Winter." By J. DOBSON COLLETT.

This short work is, as the title informs us, quite elementary. Instead of the syllable A, the author uses for vocalization the words *seconda maggior*, *seconda minor*, *terza maggior*, *terza minor*, and so forth—a plan which may prove useful to those who study the rudiments of music and singing simultaneously; and to such, no doubt, the work is chiefly addressed. It may, therefore, be looked upon as a good prelude to Miss Novello's complete *Vocal School*.—*Court Journal.*

* A Reprint of all the Tunes in Ravenscroft's *Book of Psalms*, 1621, with introductory Remarks by the Rev. W. H. Havergal, M.A. [Novello, London.]

REVIEW OF NEW MUSIC (Continued).

A Morning and Evening Cathedral Service; composed for a Chorus of Four Voices. By W. T. Best.

We have already had occasion to speak of Mr. Best as an able as well as a sound and orthodox musician. From his published works he appears to have devoted himself to sacred music, and to have gone through that severe course of study requisite to form an ecclesiastical composer. His *Morning and Evening Service* are of great merit, and well worthy of being adopted in any cathedral in the kingdom. They are entirely choral and antiphonal, without solos; the voices on the opposite sides of the choir being partly responsive and partly united in full harmony. The counterpoint is simple, without any complicated points of imitation or fugue, and the four parts frequently move in unison and octaves. The undulations are masterly, and the whole effect is grand and solemn.

The harmony seems immaculate, except, perhaps, in the bar of the "Te Deum" at the bottom of page 3, in the organ part, where C sharp and C natural are brought so closely together as to have the effect of a "false relation." But this, if an oversight, is of no great moment.—*Spectator*.

Three Preludes and Fugues; composed for the Organ, with pedal obligato. By W. T. Best.

Fugue writing, especially for the organ, is always a part of the studies of an ecclesiastical musician. The preludes and fugues before us show a thorough acquaintance with the great models of this branch of music, from Sebastian Bach and Handel down to Mendelssohn; but they show, also, that the composer has escaped from the trammels of imitation, and has gained considerable independence of style. The second of the set, dedicated to Dr. Rimbault, is the most simple, as well as the most expressive and masterly. The others, with much merit, are somewhat overcrowded with rapid notes. They also show great knowledge of the mechanism and powers of the organ.—*Spectator*.

TO CORRESPONDENTS.

We have to thank many correspondents for suggesting pieces for insertion in the Musical Times, of which we hope to avail ourselves at an early day.

AN AMATEUR'S suggestion of *Vocal Exercises* in continuation of No. 37, shall be carried out in the earliest Number we can appropriate to the purpose. A list of Musical Terms would offer some difficulties in the arrangement for binding.

Brief Chronicle of the last Month.

THE ANCIENT CHRISTIAN MUSIC.—We have a faint echo of the songs of ancient Israel and ancient Greece, in those which the Christian Church borrowed from both, and transmitted to us in the Greek and Roman churches, by written and oral tradition. The antiphones, hymns, and psalms, are remains of Grecian and Hebrew music. Both lived for nearly two thousand years in the mouth of the eastern and occidental nations, and still they stand before us living monuments of piety and enthusiasm, models of simplicity, truth, and grandeur. Who can hear, without emotion, the "Te Deum Laudamus" of Ambrose? The "Pange Lingua," the "Veni Redemptor gentium," the "Veni Creator," were for centuries the war-songs of the French armies.—*Music and Education*, by Dr. Mainzer.

MENDELSSOHN SCHOLARSHIPS.—The performance at Exeter Hall, in aid of the funds for this object, collected, perhaps, the most brilliant and aristocratic audience ever assembled in that room. The annals of music afford few instances in which cultivation applied to genius has produced a result so distinguished as the works and life of Dr. Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy. Shortly after his decease, his friends, fellow-labourers, and admirers, both in this country, as well as in various parts of Germany, desiring to testify their high appreciation of his works, and the good he had done, even during his short career, for the musical art, conceived the plan of rearing some memorial that should mark in a lasting manner the sense they entertained of his productions, and of his worth; and deemed a fitting monument to his memory would be, the establishment of Musical Scholarships bearing his name, in the Conservatory at Leipsic, and thereby afford to future artists the means of following his admirable example. We are told that the committee, before they consented to make an appeal to the public in favour of this object, exacted the condition—

"That a proportion of the scholarships shall always be held by natives of the United Kingdom; and that a part of the sum collected shall be devoted to the endowment of preparatory scholarships in the Conservatory of Leipsic reserved for the natives of the United Kingdom, to qualify them for competition for the Mendelssohn scholarship."

Mdlle. Jenny Lind had, from the first, intimated her intention of tendering her gratuitous assistance on the occasion; added to this, the cream of the two opera bands was concentrated in the one for that evening. The vocal strength of the Sacred Harmonic Society, Hullah's Upper Singing School, the Royal Academy, and the Professional Choral Society, were united in the chorus, so that public expectation was raised to the highest pitch. Nor was it disappointed. Jenny Lind was, of course, a principal object of interest, especially as it was her first public participation in English Sacred Music; the result was but additional evidence of her great and varied powers.

CHORAL MEETING AT GLOUCESTER.—At the entertainment fixed for the 29th Nov., the Misses Williams, according to previous announcement, were to aid the efforts of our local choral society. We are happy to say that the result proved gratifying and successful beyond all possible expectation. More than fifteen hundred persons, we are told, were present; and this vast body of auditors evinced by the heartiness of their applause their appreciation of the taste and talent of the two young ladies who were the *prima donnas* of the evening, and also of the efforts of the society to keep up its well-earned credit and popularity. One pleasing result of the concert has been to free the Choral Society from debt, and we hope that, relieved from any burden of that nature, the institution will go on striving and flourishing, adding to its own credit and efficiency, and continuing to afford to the public an amusement as gratifying as it is innocent and elevating.—*Gloucester Journal*.

THE GUILDFORD CHORAL SOCIETY.—This society on the 28th Nov., gave the inhabitants of that neighbourhood an opportunity of hearing Handel's Oratorio, *Samson*, which was well performed in the presence of a large audience. The committee put forward the objects of the society in the following words:—"By it, Vocal Music, in its more beneficial bearing on the

BRIEF CHRONICLE (Continued)

morals and habits of its admirers, is cultivated; first, by weekly practice in the Public Hall, of amateurs who are desirous of musical information and improvement; and secondly, by Public Concerts, through which all classes participate in its influence: by these united means, the highest productions of the science have been already introduced into Guildford: the Oratorios, the *Messiah*, *Judas Maccabæus*, *Samson*, the *Creation*, and other works, have been performed by the society, engaging at the same time the aid of exalted professional talent: the society has also interspersed Instrumental and Secular Concerts by the first artists, with Lectures and other interesting auxiliaries." We wish them all the success which the zeal and exertions of its various officers so richly deserve.

CHESTERFIELD.—Mr. Trimmell, the resident Professor, lately gave a concert of vocal and instrumental music. The orchestra of some twenty performers, led by Mr. Sewell (M.B. Oxon), and the vocalists, were all local professors. The concert was well attended, and gave so much satisfaction, as to make the probable announcement of similar concerts highly to be desired.

CHORAL MEETING AT STROUD.—The first public performance of the Singing Class, established by the directors of the Athenæum, took place in the Subscription-rooms, under the patronage of Sir John Dean Paul, Bart., and W. Capel, Esq., High Sheriff of the county. Nothing could be more gratifying, and even astonishing, to those who were unacquainted with the usual results of Hullah's system, when perseveringly followed out, than the ability and effect of the choral voices on this occasion. Amongst the choristers in the orchestra we were happy to recognize the members of some very respectable families, and whose support and co-operation in such societies is almost indispensable to give them permanence and success.—*Gloucester Journal*.

WORCESTER.—The Harmonic Society gave their fourth concert for the season on the 18th of December. Handel's oratorio, *Judas Maccabæus*, was performed, and the excellent manner in which it was given reflects considerable credit on all who were engaged in the pleasing but arduous task. The difficult choruses were executed with an energy and precision which we have seldom heard surpassed, and afforded ample proof of the diligence of the whole choral force, and the ability and unwearied attention of the conductor, Mr. Done. Each succeeding concert given by the Harmonic Society shows that good solo voices are by no means rare amongst its forces, all of whom the *Worcester Chronicle*, from whom we quote, particularizes, pointing out their various merits. We must not conclude our notice of this excellent concert without expressing our approbation of the efficient manner in which Mr. Haynes discharged his duties at the organ. This young gentleman is under the instruction of Mr. Done, and has proved himself a worthy pupil of a good master. [Condensed from the *Worcester Chron.*]

BRISTOL.—In these times of progress, it is with regret that we have to notice the late arrangements at the Cathedral in Bristol, where much of the usual musical service has been discontinued. The subject has been taken up so warmly by those whose especial duty it is to watch ecclesiastical proceedings, that we may hope for a speedy return to the old method of performing service.

MUSICAL AND DRAMATIC GOSSIP.—The solitary pieces of concerted vocal music in the long programme of last Wednesday's concert at Exeter Hall, were the duet "Fair Aurora," from *Artaxerxes*, and Sir H. R. Bishop's "Indian Drum." While ballad-ism—in the persons of Mr. Templeton, Mr. Russell, Mrs. Wood and her pupils (one of whom, according to the Lancashire papers, sings "When I heard that he was married" most touchingly), and half-a-hundred other persons who ought to know better—is making such strides just now in London and "the Provinces," all entertainments of a better sort deserve a more than usual careful recognition. To enumerate all the local Choral Societies which seem springing up throughout England—announced in the *Musical Times* and other contemporaries—is impossible; but we must notice one or two performances of more than usual enterprise and interest. The *Hargreaves Choral Society*, at musical Manchester, is grappling with Beethoven's posthumous Mass—a work not to be touched by any of the genus *tyro*, and not to be relished save by advanced audiences. At the *Manchester Mechanics' Institution* concert of this evening, was to be given Mendelssohn's *St. Paul*, with Dr. S. Wesley at the Organ.—(This oratorio, the Londoner should be reminded, has never been performed with anything approaching to perfection in the Metropolis.) There is healthy life, too, in Manchester's neighbour.—The committee of the *Liverpool Mechanics' Institution* is catering for the pleasure of its clients during the Christmas holidays in a truly enlightened spirit. Mr. and Miss Vandenhoff are announced to give readings of *Antigone*, at which the choruses of Mendelssohn will be performed, under the superintendence of Mr. J. Zeugheer Herrman. This, we happen to know, ensures the best practicable execution. In its way, too, the announcement of the organ performance given the other evening at our own *Beaumont Institution*, was gratifying.—*Athenæum*, 9th December.

ITALIAN OPERA IN NEW YORK.—The chief event of our musical season, the opening of the Italian Opera, has this week taken place, and with a brilliancy which fully equals the liberality of the previous announcements. In his prospectus, Mr. Fry gives notice that "The Opera House will be properly furnished in the retiring rooms and lobbies; that the bar for the sale of liquors will be closed; that a strict police will exclude all improper persons and preserve perfect order; care will be taken to protect visitors from all petty annoyances; cloaks, hats, &c., will be taken care of, free of charge; tea, coffee, ices, &c., will be served at moderate price in the saloons; and all other steps will be taken to render the house comfortable and commodious." The five works—*Norma*, *L'Elisir d'Amore*, *Lucrezia Borgia*, *Lucia di Lammermoor*, and *Linda di Chamounix*, are already fully rehearsed, and ready for immediate representation. *La Gazza Ladra*, *Ernani*, and *Don Pasquale*, are in preparation! while, in the department of grand opera, we have a prospect of having Donizetti's *La Favorita*, which was lately given with such success in London, and Mozart's *Don Giovanni*. The subscription amounts to fifty performances, on the Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays. The opera has opened with every prospect of ultimate and deserved success, and promises to meet with the brilliant attendance it merits.—*New York Literary World*.

ADVERTISEMENTS (continued).

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